

BURKINA FASO (Tier 2)

Burkina Faso is a source, transit, and destination country for children and women trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation, with most victims being children. Within the country, most children are trafficked from rural areas to urban centers such as Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso, for domestic servitude, sexual exploitation, forced agricultural labor, and forced labor in gold mines and stone quarries. Burkinabe children are also trafficked to other West African countries for the same purposes listed above, most notably to Cote d'Ivoire, but also to Mali, Benin, Nigeria, Niger, and Togo. Children from these West African countries are trafficked to Burkina Faso for the same purposes listed above. To a lesser extent, Burkina Faso is a source country for women lured to Europe with promises of jobs as maids, but who are forced into prostitution after arrival. Women from Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Ghana, and Niger reportedly are trafficked to Burkina Faso for forced labor in bars or for commercial sexual exploitation.

The Government of Burkina Faso does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so, despite limited resources. Burkina Faso's law enforcement and protection efforts remained steady over the past year, but sentences imposed on convicted traffickers were inadequate and the government failed to implement procedures to identify trafficking victims among women in prostitution.

Recommendations for Burkina Faso: Pass legislation prohibiting the trafficking of adults; increase penalties imposed on convicted traffickers; train police and government social workers to identify trafficking victims among females in prostitution; ensure that sex trafficking victims are not penalized as criminals for acts committed as a result of being trafficked; and increase efforts to raise awareness about trafficking.

Prosecution

The Government of Burkina Faso demonstrated solid law enforcement efforts to combat trafficking over the last year. Burkina Faso does not prohibit all forms of trafficking, though its 2003 Law No. 038-2003 concerning the Definition of Child Trafficking in Burkina criminalizes all forms of child trafficking and prescribes a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment, which is sufficiently stringent but is not commensurate with higher penalties prescribed for rape. The government reported arresting 23 suspected child traffickers during the year. Eleven of these suspects were convicted for trafficking under either child trafficking or kidnapping laws; four remain in detention awaiting trial, and eight were released due to lack of evidence. Sentences imposed on convicted traffickers were inadequate, however, with five receiving two to 24 months' imprisonment and six receiving suspended sentences of six to 24 months' imprisonment. On February 7, 2008, the Mayor of Ouagadougou ordered that all brothels be closed by May 2008, threatening the use of existing laws to seize any properties used for prostitution after that date. However, during the reporting period, police did not investigate existing brothels to identify traffickers or trafficking victims. The Ministry of Social Action contributed a training site as well as personnel to conduct trafficking training for a UNICEF-sponsored group of 120 national and local law enforcement authorities.

Protection

The Government of Burkina Faso continued to protect trafficking victims over the last year. The government continued to contribute building facilities and personnel to a privately funded center in Ouagadougou for the rehabilitation and reintegration of at-risk children, including trafficking victims. The government also continued to contribute land grants and personnel to 21 UNICEF-funded trafficking victim transit centers throughout the country. In 2007, these centers provided care to 312 child trafficking victims who were intercepted by security forces and regional anti-trafficking surveillance committees. On average, children stayed in these centers for only a few days before being returned to their families. After their stay at the centers, foreign victims were repatriated to appropriate officials in their countries of origin. Approximately 312 trafficked children, including 34 who had been internationally trafficked, received care in transit centers before being returned to their respective families, or repatriated to their countries of origin. Burkina Faso cooperated with IOM and the Governments of Mali and Cote d'Ivoire to repatriate 21 Burkinabe children trafficked to Mali and Cote d'Ivoire. The government identified the victims' families and helped provide psychological counseling for the children and sensitization about trafficking to their home communities. Women in prostitution are subject to arrest and detention for public solicitation, but police do not attempt to identify trafficking victims among those arrested for prostitution violations. Government officials encourage victims to assist in trafficking investigations or prosecutions by interviewing them for evidence to prosecute traffickers.

Prevention

The Government of Burkina Faso made modest efforts to raise awareness about trafficking in the last year.

During the year, the government used its own media outlets to broadcast documentaries and theater productions against trafficking as well as anti-trafficking statements by government officials, traditional chiefs, and religious leaders. The government's anti-trafficking committee did not hold its quarterly meetings during the last year due to a restructuring. By ordering the closure of all brothels, the government took steps to reduce demand for commercial sex acts in Burkina Faso, but failed to implement procedures to identify trafficking victims among females in prostitution.